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NSC BRIEFING

14 April 1954

MILITARY SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

I. French retaken important point at
Dien Bien Phu.

A. Eliane subposition 1
wholly recaptured 10
April; counterattacks
thus far repulsed.

B. Eliane 1 has commanding
view most of central defenses
and thus important observation
post for fire direction. Also,
Viet Minh can use fire down on
French. But it dominated by
enemy-held Dominique 2.

French retention Eliane 1
difficult unless can retake
Dominique 2.

NSA, DIA reviews completed

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II. French established new strongpoint

Lily from Huguette and Claudine to
strengthen west defenses.

III. French reinforced with another

Foreign Legion battalion.

A. This drop took place

7-12 April.

B. This makes four battalions

since middle March.

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IX. In rest of Indochina, enemy guerrilla tactics, harassment continue.

A. Haiphong-Hanoi communications repeatedly cut and enemy not yet fully extended.

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- B. Vientiane airfield attacked
8 April by guerrillas. Not
very damaging but further
evidence coordinated Viet
Minh tactics, harassment
important installations,
spreading of French units.
- C. Concentration several Viet
Minh regular units east
Pleiku in Annam indicates
plan put pressure this area,
prevent transfer French units
to Tonkin.
- D. Two enemy battalions reported
heading toward Stung Treng in
Cambodia. Have evaded French
force of five battalions.

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X. In connection Cambodian participation against Viet Minh invaders, some of king's extremist advisers balked at proposed joint French-Cambodian operations against enemy.

A. King and French had agreed two weeks ago that French units would serve under king's command in opposing the recent Viet Minh incursion of Cambodia.

B. Then few nationalistic advisers prodded by Buddhist monks (Bonzes) urged king repudiate agreement with French. They objected to any cooperation.

C. But king stood firm and on 4 April opposition finally yielded to his wishes. Therefore, king now proceeding to lead combined attack against

Viet Minh

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XI.

A. Actually Vietnam government
eager build up army. Just
created War Cabinet of four
(led by Bao Dai) to press
fight against Viet Minh.
Issued call for total mobili-
zation of all men between
20-25.

1. Already had limited
conscription but new
order is good psycho-
logical move.

B. But handicapped by fence-
sitting Viets.

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- C. French control training Viet
army. Have failed make
maximum effort. They hotly
oppose US help.
- D. Opposition of politico-
religious warlord armies
(totaling 26,000 troops) to
integration been abetted by
"divide and rule" encourage-
ment from French.
- E. However, last Saturday, newly
created War Cabinet proclaimed
integration these so-called
"confessional armies." It
remains to be seen if this
order will be effective.

XII. Vietnamese regulars total some 129,000
troops, plus additional 29,000 National
Guardsmen.

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A. Vietnamese troops organized
in battalion or smaller units;
dispersed throughout Indochina:
56,000 in Tonkin, 50,000 in
Annam, and 52,000 in Cochinchina.

B. Combat efficiency low, owing
lack experience, spotty morale,
inadequate training, few good
officers.

C. These troops largely engaged
static defense; brunt of any
operations falls on French
and colonial troops.

D. Light battalion program begun
last year resulted formation
55 units; 66 more tentatively
planned this year. These units
may eventually constitute
striking force, but inadequate
now.

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